

THE FIFTH BEATITUDE NO. 3158

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“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”
Matthew 5:7

[In the year 1873, Mr. Spurgeon delivered what he called “a series of sententious homilies” on the Beatitudes. After an introductory discourse upon the Sermon on the mount and the Beatitudes as a whole, he intended to preach upon each one separately, but either illness or some other special reason prevented him from fully carrying out this purpose. There are, however, seven sermons upon the Beatitudes which have already been published—See sermons #422, The Peacemaker; #2103, The Hunger and Thirst Which Are Blessed; #3155, The Beatitudes; #3156, The First Beatitude; #3065, The Third Beatitude and #3157, The Fourth Beatitude—and this one. Mr. Spurgeon’s exposition of each of the Beatitudes and of the whole Sermon on the mount also appears in *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, the volume upon which he was at work at Mentone up to a little while before his “home-call” in 1892]

I MUST take for granted the fact that you have heard the previous discourses upon the Beatitudes. If you have not done so, I cannot now repeat all that I have said, but I may remind you that I have compared the Beatitudes to a ladder of light, and I have remarked that every one of them rises above and out of those which preceded it.

So you will notice that the character mentioned here is higher than those which had been given before—higher than that of the man who is poor in spirit, or who mourns. Those things concern himself. He is yet feeble and out of that weakness grows meekness of spirit, which makes him endure wrongs from others.

But to be merciful is more than that, for the man now not merely endures wrongs, but he confers benefits. The Beatitude before this one concerns hungering and thirsting after righteousness, but here the man has got beyond mere righteousness—he has risen beyond the seeking of that which is right into the seeking of that which is good, and kind, and generous, and the doing of kindly things towards his fellow man.

The whole ladder rests upon grace, and grace puts every stave into its place, and it is grace which, in this place, has taught the man to be merciful, and has blessed him, and given him the promise that he shall obtain mercy. It would be wrong to take any one of these benedictions by itself and to say that every merciful man shall obtain mercy, or to misquote any other one in the same way, for that would be to wrest the Savior’s Words and to give them a meaning which He never intended them to convey.

Reading these Beatitudes as a whole, we see that this mercifulness, of which I am about to speak, is a characteristic which has grown out of the rest—it has sprung from all the previous works of grace, and the man is not merely merciful in the human sense—with a humanity which ought to be common to all mankind—but he is merciful in a higher and better sense, with a mercy which only the Spirit of God can ever teach to the soul of man.

Having noticed the rising of this Beatitude above the rest, we will now come to look at it more closely. It is needful that we should be very guarded while speaking upon it, and in order to be so, we will ask, first, *who are these blessed people?* Secondly, *what is their peculiar virtue?* And thirdly, *what is their special blessing?*

I. WHO ARE THESE BLESSED PEOPLE—THE MERCIFUL THAT OBTAIN MERCY?

You remember that at the commencement of our homilies upon this Sermon on the mount, we noticed that our Lord's subject was not *how* we are to be saved, but *who are* saved. He is not here describing the way of salvation at all. That He does in many other places, but He here gives us the signs and evidences of the work of grace in the soul. So that we should greatly err if we should say that we must be merciful in order to obtain mercy and that we must only hope to get the mercy of God through first of all being merciful ourselves.

Now, in order to put aside any such legal notion—which would be clean contrary to the entire current of Scripture and directly opposed to the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith in Christ—I ask you to notice that these persons are blessed already and have obtained mercy already. Long before they became merciful, God was merciful to them. And before the full promise was given them, as in our text, that they should obtain yet further mercy, they had already obtained the great mercy of a renewed heart, which had made them merciful. That is clear from the connection of the text.

For, first, *they were poor in spirit*, and it is no mean mercy to be emptied of our pride, to be brought to see how undeserving we are in the sight of God, and to be made to feel our personal weakness and want of everything that might make us fit for the presence of God. I could ask for some men whom I know no greater mercy than that they might be blessed with spiritual poverty—that they might be made to feel how poor they are—for they will never know Christ and they will never rise to be practically merciful themselves till first they have seen their own true condition, and have obtained mercy enough to lie down at the foot of the cross, and there, with a broken heart, to confess that they are empty and poor.

The connection also shows that these persons *had obtained mercy enough to mourn*. They had mourned over their past sins with bitter repentance, they had mourned over the condition of practical alienation from God, into which sin had brought them, and they had mourned over the fact of their ingratitude to their Redeemer, and their rebellion against His Holy Spirit. They mourned because they could not mourn more, and they wept because their eyes could not weep as they ought concerning sin. They had—

*“Learned to weep for nought but sin,
And after none but Christ.”*

And it is no small blessing to have the mourning, the broken, the contrite heart, for this the Lord will not despise.

They had also obtained the grace of meekness, and had become gentle, humble, contented, weaned from the world, submissive to the Lord's will, ready to overlook the offenses of others, having learned to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”—no small blessing this. They had indeed obtained mercy, when their proud heart was brought low, their haughty spirit was bowed down, and they had become meek and lowly, in measure like their Lord.

They had obtained yet further grace, for *they had been taught to hunger and thirst after righteousness*. They had a spiritual appetite for the righteousness which is of God by faith. They had also a sacred hunger for the practical inwrought righteousness which is the work of the Spirit of God. They loved that which was right and they hungered to do it. They hungered to see others do right, they hungered to see the kingdom of righteousness established, and the truth of God prevailing over all the earth. Was not this indeed to obtain mercy?

And if out of this grew the character of being merciful, it was not to be ascribed to anything in themselves or regarded as a natural outgrowth of their own disposition, but as another gift of grace, another fruit which grew out of special fruits which had already been given. Was it not already said of these people, “Their's is the kingdom of heaven”? Had they not obtained mercy? Was it not said of them, “They shall be comforted”? Who dares say they had not obtained mercy? Had it not been said of them, “They shall inherit the earth”? What do you call this but mercy? Had not the voice of Christ declared, “They shall be filled”? Was not this mercy to the full? And therefore I say that the people our

text speaks of were a people who had already obtained mercy, who were themselves singular trophies of mercy.

And the fact that they displayed mercy to others was inevitable as a result of what had been done for them and wrought in them by the ever-blessed Spirit of God. They were not merciful because they were naturally tender-hearted, but merciful because God had made them poor in spirit—not merciful because they had generous ancestors, but merciful because they themselves had mourned and been comforted.

They were not merciful because they sought the esteem of their fellow men, but because they were themselves meek and lowly, and were inheriting the earth—and wished that others could enjoy as they did the blessing of heaven. They were not merciful because they could not help it, and felt bound to be so from some constraint from which they would gladly escape, but they were joyfully merciful—for they had hungered and thirsted after righteousness and they had been filled.

II. Now, secondly, **WHAT IS THE PECULIAR VIRTUE WHICH IS HERE ASCRIBED TO THESE BLESSED ONES?** They were “merciful.”

To be merciful would include, first of all, *kindness to the sons of want and the daughters of penury*. No merciful man could forget the poor. He who passed by their ills without sympathy, and saw their suffering without relieving them, might prate as he would about inward grace, but grace in his heart there could not be. The Lord does not own as of His family one who can see his brother have need and shuts up “his bowels of compassion from him.”

The apostle John rightly asks, “How dwells the love of God in him?” No, the truly merciful are considerate of those who are poor. They think of them. Their own comforts make them think of them. At other times, their own discomforts will. When they are sick and they are surrounded with many alleviations, they wonder how those fare who are sick and in poverty too.

When the blast is keen about them, and their garments are warm, they think with pity of those who shiver in the same cold, but are scantily covered with rags. Their sufferings and their joys alike help them to consider the poor.

And they consider them practically. They do not merely say that they sympathize and hope others will help, but they give of their substance according to their ability, joyfully and cheerfully, that the poor may not lack—and in dealing with them, they are not hard. They will remit, as far as they can justly do so, anything they may have demanded of them and will not persecute them to the utmost extremity, and pinch and cheat them, as those do who seek to skin a flint, and to obtain the last morsel, and the uttermost farthing from the poorest of the poor.

No, where God has given a man a new heart and a right spirit, there is great tenderness to all the poor—and especially great love to the poor saints—for, while every saint is an image of Christ, the poor saint is a picture of Christ set in the same frame in which Christ’s picture must ever be set—the frame of humble poverty.

I see in a rich saint much that is like his Master, but I do not see how he could truthfully say, “I have not where to lay my head.” Nor do I wish him to say it. But when I see poverty, as well as everything else that is like Christ, I think I am bound to feel my heart specially going forth there. This is how we can still wash Christ’s feet by caring for the poorest of His people. This is how honorable women can still minister to Him of their substance.

This is how we can still make a great feast to which we may invite Him, when we call together the poor, and the lame, and the halt, and the blind, who cannot recompense us—and we are content to do it for Jesus Christ’s sake. It is said of Chrysostom that he so continually preached the doctrine of almsgiving in the Christian church that they called him the preacher of alms—and I think it was not a bad title for a man to wear.

In these days, it has almost become a crime to relieve the poor. In fact, I do not know whether there are not some statutes which might almost render us liable to prosecution for it. I can only say that the spirit of the times may be wise under some aspects, but it does not seem to me to be very clearly the spirit of the New Testament.

The poor will never cease out of the land and the poor will never cease out of the church of Christ. They are Christ's legacy to us. It is quite certain that the good Samaritan got more out of the poor man whom he found between Jerusalem and Jericho than the poor man got out of him. He had a little oil and wine, and twopence, the expenses at the inn—but the Samaritan got his name in the Bible and there it has been handed down to posterity—a wonderfully cheap investment. And in everything that we give, the blessing comes to those who give it, for you know the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Blessed are they who are merciful to the poor.

Next, *the merciful man has an eager eye, a weeping eye for mourners who are round about him.* The worst ill in the world is not poverty—the worst of ills is a depressed spirit. At least, I scarcely know anything that can be worse than this, and there are even among the excellent of the earth some who seldom have a bright day in the whole year. December seems to rule the whole twelve months.

By reason of heaviness, they are all their life subject to bondage. If they march to heaven, it is on crutches as Mr. Ready-to-Halt did, and they water the way with tears as Miss Much-afraid did. They are sometimes afraid that they never were converted. At another time, that they have fallen from grace. At another time, that they have sinned the unpardonable sin. At another time, that Christ has gone from them and they will never see His face again.

They are full of all manner of troubles, "they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are often at their wit's end." There are many Christian people who always get out of the way of such folks as these—or if they come across them, they say, "It is enough to give anybody the miserables. Who wants to talk with such people? They ought not to be so sad. They really ought to be more cheerful, they are giving way to nervousness," and so on.

That may be quite true, but it is always a pity to say it. You might as well tell a man when he has a headache that he is giving way to headache, or when he has the ague or the fever that he is giving way to the ague or the fever. The fact is, there is nothing more real than some of those diseases which are traceable to the imagination, for they are real in their pain, though perhaps as to their causes we could not reason about them.

The merciful man is always merciful to these people. He puts up with their whims. He knows very often that they are very foolish, but he understands that he would be foolish too if he were to tell them so, for it would make them more foolish than they are. He does not consult his own comfort and say, "I want to get comfort from this person"—he desires to confer comfort.

He remembers that it is written, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees," and he knows that command, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." He understands that, as His Lord and Master sought after that which was wounded, bound up that which was broken, healed that which was sick, and brought again that which was driven away, even so ought all His servants to imitate their Master by looking with the greatest interest after those who are in the saddest plight.

O children of God, if ever you are hardhearted towards any sorrowful persons, you are not what you ought to be. You are not like your Master. You are not like yourselves when you are in your right state, for when you are in your right state, you are tender, and pitiful, and full of compassion, for you have learnt from the Lord Jesus that the merciful are blessed, and that they shall obtain mercy.

Possibly, when you too come to be depressed, as you may—you may recollect those jeering words and those unkind expressions which you used concerning others. When we get very big, it may be that the Lord will take us down and we shall be glad of any little mouse hole to hide our head. Some of us have known what it is to be glad of the very least promise, if we could but get a hold of it. And we have run with eagerness to the very texts we used to point poor sinners to—and felt they were the very texts we wanted.

Dr. Guthrie, when he was very ill and about to die, said he liked to hear the bairns' hymns, the little children's hymns, and the strongest men in the family of Christ often want the bairns' texts and the

bairns' promises. Even the little children's promises suit big men when they are in that sad state. Be ye merciful, even as your heavenly Father is merciful, towards those that are cast down.

This mercy extends itself next to the full forgiveness of all personal offenses against ourselves. "Blessed are the merciful," that is, those persons who do not take to heart any injuries that are done them, any insults, intended or unintended. A certain governor of Georgia, in Mr. Wesley's day, said that he would have his servant on board his vessel flogged for drinking his wine. And when Mr. Wesley entreated that the man might be pardoned on that occasion, the governor said, "It is no use, Mr. Wesley, you know, sir, I never forgive." "Well, then, sir," said Mr. Wesley, "I hope you know that you will never be forgiven, or else I hope that you have never sinned." So, until we leave off sinning, we must never talk of not forgiving other people, for we shall need forgiveness for ourselves.

You will notice in many families that quarrels arise even between brothers and sisters, but let us always be ready to put aside anything that will make a jar or cause ill-feeling, for a Christian is the last person who should harbor unkind thoughts.

I have occasionally noticed great severity towards servants, who are sometimes thrown out of situations, and exposed to many temptations, for a fault that might be cured if it were forgiven and if some kindly word were used. It is not right for any one of us to say, "I will have everybody acting straight towards me, and I will let all know it. I am determined to stand no nonsense, not I! I mean to have the right thing done by all men towards me—and if not, I will set *them* to rights."

Ah, dear friends, God never talked so to you. And let me also say, if that is the way you talk, it is not the language of a child of God at all. A child of God feels that he is himself imperfect and that he lives with imperfect people. When they act improperly towards him, he feels it, but at the same time he also feels, "I have been far worse to my God than they have been to me, so I will let it go by."

I recommend you, dear brethren and sisters, always to have one blind eye and one deaf ear. I have always tried to have them and my blind eye is the best eye I have, and my deaf ear is the best ear I have. There is many a speech that you may hear even from your best friends that would cause you much grief and produce much ill—so do not hear it. They will probably be sorry that they spoke so unkindly, if you never mention it, and let the whole thing die.

But if you say something about it, and bring it up again and again, and fret and worry over it, and magnify it, and tell somebody else about it, and bring half-a-dozen people into the quarrel—that is the way family disagreements have been made, Christian churches broken up, the devil magnified, and God dishonored. Oh, do not let it be so with us, but let us feel if there is any offense against us, "Blessed are the merciful," and such we mean to be.

But this mercifulness goes much further. *There must and will be great mercy in the Christian's heart towards those who are outwardly sinful.* The Pharisee had no mercy upon the man who was a publican. "Well," he said, "if he has gone down so low as to collect the Roman tax from his fellow subjects, he is a disgraceful fellow. He may get as far as ever he can from my dignified self."

And as for the harlot, it mattered not though she might be ready to shed enough tears to wash her Savior's feet, yet she was a polluted thing. And Christ Himself was looked upon as being polluted because He allowed a woman who had been a sinner thus to show her repentance and her love. Simon and the other Pharisees felt, "Such people have put themselves out of the pale of society, and there let them keep. If they have gone astray like that, let them suffer for it."

There is still much of that spirit in this hypocritical world, for a great part of the world is a mass of the most awful hypocrisy that one can imagine. There are men that are living in vile sin, they know they are, and yet they go into society, and are received as if they were the most respectable persons in the world.

But should it so happen that some poor woman is led astray, oh dear, dear, dear! She is much too vile for these gentlemen to know anything about her existence. The scoundrels—to have an affectation of virtue while they are themselves indulging in the grossest vice! Yet so it is and there is a prudery

about society which says at once, "Oh, we hold up our hands in horror at anybody who has done anything at all wrong against society, or the laws of the land."

Now a Christian thinks far harder things of sin than the worldling does. He judges sin by a much sterner rule than other men do, but he always thinks kindly of the sinner. And if he could, he would lay down his life to reclaim him, as his Master did before him. He does not say, "Stand by yourself, come not near me, for I am holier than you." But he reckons it to be his chief concern on earth to cry to sinners, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

So the merciful Christian is not one who shuts anybody out. He is not one who thinks anyone beneath his notice. He would be glad if he could bring to Jesus the most fallen and the most depraved. And those dear brethren who are the most completely occupied in this holy work we honor, for the lower they have to go, the greater is their honor, in the sight of God, in being permitted thus to rake the very kennels of sin to find Koh-i-noors for Christ, for surely, the brightest gems in His crown will come out of the darkest and foulest places where they have been lost. "Blessed are the merciful" who care for the fallen, for those that have gone astray, "for they shall obtain mercy."

But *a genuine Christian has mercy on the souls of all men*. He cares not merely for the extremely fallen class, so called by the men of the world, but he regards the whole race as fallen. He knows that all men have gone astray from God, and that all are shut up in sin and unbelief till eternal mercy comes to their deliverance. Therefore his pity goes forth towards the respectable, and the rich, and the great, and he often pities princes and kings because they have so few to tell them the truth.

He pities the poor rich, for while there are efforts made for the reclaiming of the working classes, how few efforts are ever made for the reclaiming of peers and duchesses—and bringing such big sinners as the "Right Honorable" to know Jesus Christ!! He feels pity for them and he feels pity for all nations—the nations that sit in heathen darkness and those that are locked up in Popery. He longs that grace should come to all and that the truths of the Gospel should be proclaimed in every street, and Jesus made known to every son and daughter of Adam. He has a love for them all. And I pray you, brethren, never to trifle with this true instinct of the new-born nature.

The great doctrine of election is very precious to us and we hold it most firmly. But there are some (and it must not be denied) who allow that doctrine to chill their love towards their fellow men. They do not seem to have much zeal for their conversion and are quite content to sit down, or stand idle, and believe that the decrees and purposes of God will be fulfilled.

So they will, brethren, but it will be through warm-hearted Christians who bring others to Jesus. The Lord Jesus will see of the travail of His soul, but it will be by one who is saved telling of salvation to another, and that other to a third, and so on till the sacred fire spreads, until the earth shall be girdled with its flame.

The Christian is merciful to all and anxiously longs that they may be brought to know the Savior, and he makes efforts to reach them—to the utmost of his ability, he tries to win souls to Jesus. He also prays for them. If he is really a child of God, he takes time to plead with God for sinners and he gives what he can to help others to spend their time in telling sinners the way of salvation and pleading with them as ambassadors for Christ. The Christian man makes this one of his great delights, if by any means he may turn a sinner, by the power of the Spirit, from the error of his ways, and so may save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins.

I have many more things to say about this mercifulness. It is so wide a subject that I cannot give all its details. It certainly means a love to God at bottom, which shows itself by *merciful desires for the good of God's creatures*. The merciful man is merciful to his beast. I do not believe in the piety of a man who is cruel to a horse. There is need of the whip sometimes, but the man who uses it cruelly surely cannot be a converted man. There are sometimes sights to be seen in our streets which may well provoke the God of heaven to come down in indignation and punish the cruelty of brutal persons to brute beasts.

But where the grace of God is in our heart, we would not cause unnecessary pain to a fly. And if, in the course of the necessities of mankind, pain must be given to the inferior animals, the Christian heart is

pained and will try to devise all possible means to prevent any unnecessary pain from being endured by a single creature that God's hand has made. There is some truth in that saying of the ancient mariner, "He prays well who loves well both man and bird and beast." There is a touch, if it is not always of grace, of something like grace in the kindness of heart which every Christian should feel towards all the living things that God has made.

Further, the merciful man shows his mercy to his fellow men in many ways of this kind. *He is merciful to their characters*, merciful in not believing a great many reports he hears about reputed good men. He is told some astonishing story very derogatory to the character of a Christian brother and he says, "Now, if that brother were told this story about me, I should not like him to believe it of me unless he searched it out, and was quite sure of it, and I won't believe it of him unless I am forced to do so."

It is a delightful thing for Christians to have confidence in one another's characters. Wherever that rules in a church, it will prevent a world of sorrow. Brother, I have more confidence in you than I can ever have in myself. And as I can truly say that, you should be able to say the same of your fellow Christians, too.

Do not be ready to receive such reports—there is as much wickedness in believing a lie as in telling it, if we are always ready to believe it. There would be no slanderers if there were no receivers and believers of slander, for when there is no demand for an article, there are no producers of it. And if we will not believe evil reports, the tale-bearer will be discouraged and leave off his evil trade.

But suppose we are compelled to believe it? Then the merciful man shows his mercy by not repeating it. "Alas!" says he, "it is true and I am very sorry, but why should I publish it abroad?" If there happened to be a traitor in a regiment, I do not think the other soldiers would go and publish it everywhere and say, "Our regiment has been dishonored by one of our comrades." "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest," and it is an ill professor who uses his tongue to tell the faults and failures of his brethren.

Then suppose we have heard of such a thing—the merciful man feels it his duty not to repeat it. Many a man has been ruined for life through some fault which he committed when young, which has been severely dealt with. A young man has misappropriated a sum of money and has been brought before the magistrates, and put in jail—and so made a thief for life. Forgiveness for the first action, with prayer and kindly rebuke, might have won him to a life of virtue, or (who knows?) to a life of piety. It is for the Christian, at any rate, not to expose, unless it is absolutely needful, as sometimes it is—but to deal ever towards the erring in the gentlest manner possible.

And brethren, we should be merciful to one another in seeking never to look at the worst side of a brother's character. Oh, how quick some are to spy out other people's faults! They hear that Mr. So-and-so is very useful in the church, and they say, "Yes, he is, but he has a very curious way of going to work, has he not? And he is so eccentric." Well, did you ever know a good man who was very successful, who was not a little eccentric? Some people are a deal too smooth ever to do much—it is the odd knots about us that are the force of our character, but why be so quick to point out all our flaws?

Do you go out, when the sun is shining brightly, and say, "Yes, this sun is a very good illuminator, but I remark that it has spots." If you do, you had better keep your remark to yourself for it gives more light than you do, whatever spots you may have or may not have. And many excellent persons in the world have spots, but yet they do good service to God and to their age, so let us not always be the spot-finders, but let us look at the bright side of the brother's character rather than the dark one, and feel that we rise in repute when other Christians rise in repute, and that as they have honor through their holiness, our Lord is the glory of it, and we share in some of the comfort of it.

And let us never join in the loud outcries that are sometimes raised against men who may have committed very small offenses. Many and many a time we have heard men cry, their voices sounding like the baying of a pack of hounds against some man for a mistaken judgment, or what was little more, "Down with him, down with him!"

And if he happens to get into some pecuniary trouble at the same time, then he must surely be a worthless fellow—for lack of gold is with some men a clear proof of the lack of virtue, and want of success in business is regarded by some as the most damning of all vices. But from such outcries against good men who make mistakes, may we be delivered. And may our mercy always take the shape of being willing to restore to our love and to our society any who may have erred, but who, nevertheless, show hearty and true repentance and a desire henceforth to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things!

You who are merciful will be ready to receive your prodigal brother when he comes back to his Father's house. Do not be like the elder brother, and when you hear the music and the dancing, ask, "What do these things mean?" but count it right that all should be glad when he who was lost is found, he who was dead is made alive again.

I can only throw out hints that may suit one or another of you. My brothers and sisters, we ought to be merciful in the sense of *not allowing others to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear*. You know that there is such a thing as exposing our young people to temptation. Parents will sometimes allow their boys to start in life in houses where there is a chance of rising, but where there is a greater chance of falling into great sin. They do not esteem the moral risks which they sometimes run in putting their sons into large houses where there is no regard to morals and where there are a thousand nets of Satan spread to take unwary birds. Be merciful to your children—let them not be exposed to evils which were, perhaps, too strong for you in your youth, and which will be too powerful for them. Let your mercy consider them and do not put them in that position.

And as to your clerks, and servants, we sometimes, when we have dishonest people about us, are about as guilty as they are. We did not lock up our money and take proper care of it. If we had done so, they could not have stolen it. We leave things about sometimes and through our carelessness the suggestion may often come, "May I not take this and take that?" And so we may be partakers in their sins through our own want of care. Remember, they are but men and women—sometimes they are but boys and girls, and do not put baits before them, do not play cat's paw for Satan, but keep temptation from them as much as lies in you.

And let us be merciful, too, to people *in not expecting too much from them*. I believe there are persons who expect those who work for them to toil four-and-twenty hours a day, or thereabouts. No matter how hard the task, it never strikes them that their servants' heads ache, or that their legs grow weary. "What were they made for but to slave for us?"

That is the kind of notion some have, but that is not the notion of a true Christian. He feels that he desires his servants and his dependents to do their duty and he is grieved to find that many of them cannot be got to do that, but when he sees them diligently doing it, he often feels for them even more than they feel for themselves, for he is considerate and gentle. Who likes to drive a horse that extra mile that makes him feel ready to drop? Who would wish to get out of his fellow man that extra hour of work which is just that which makes him wretched? Putting all that I have said into one sentence, let us, dear friends, be tender, considerate, kind, and gentle to all.

"Oh," says one, "if we were to go about the world acting like that, we should get imposed upon, we should get badly treated," and so on. Well, try it, brother. Try it, sister. And you shall find that any misery that comes to you through being too tenderhearted, and too gentle, and too merciful, will be so light an affliction that it will not be worthy to be compared with the peace of mind that it will bring you, and the constant wellspring of joy which it will put into your own bosom as well as into the bosoms of others.

III. I shall close by briefly noticing THE BLESSING WHICH IS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO ARE MERCIFUL.

It is said of them that "they shall obtain mercy." I cannot help believing that this means in this present life as well as in the life to come. Surely this is David's meaning in the forty-first Psalm, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble....He shall be

blessed upon the earth." Is that text gone altogether under the new dispensation? Are those promises only meant for the old legal times?

Ah, brethren, we have the sun, but remember that, when the sun shines, the stars are shining also—we do not see them by reason of the greater brightness, but every star is shining in the day as well as in the night—and increasing the light. And so, though the greater promises of the Gospel do sometimes make us forget the promises of the old dispensation, yet they are not cancelled. They are still there and they are confirmed—and they are made yes and Amen in Christ Jesus, unto the glory of God by us.

I firmly believe that, when a man is in trouble, if he has been enabled, through divine grace, to be kind and generous towards others, he may look to God in prayer and say, "Lord, there is Your promise. I claim no merit for it, but Your grace has enabled me, when I saw others in the same condition as I am, to help them. Lord, raise me up a helper."

Job seemed to get some comfort out of that fact. It is not our grandest comfort or our best. As I have said, it is not the sun, it is only one of the stars. At the same time, we do not despise the starlight. I believe that God will full often help and bless in temporal matters those persons whom He has blessed with a merciful spirit towards others.

And often it is true in another sense that those who have been merciful obtain mercy, for *they obtain mercy from others*. Our Savior said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." There will be this sort of general feeling. If a man was sternly just and no more, when he comes down in the world, few pity him. But that other man, whose earnest endeavor it was to be the helper of others, when he is found in trouble, all say, "We are so sorry for him."

But the full meaning of the text, no doubt, relates to that day of which Paul wrote concerning his friend, Onesiphorus, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord *in that day*." Do not think that I am preaching up mercy as a meritorious work—I did my best at the outset to put all that aside. But as an evidence of grace, mercifulness is a very prominent and distinguishing mark.

And if you want proof of that, let me remind you that our Savior's own description of the day of judgment runs thus, "Then shall the king say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." This, therefore, is evidence that they were blessed of the Father.

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